DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 584 SO 030 546

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| AUTHOR | Sewall, Gilbert T. |
| TITLE | Learning about Religion, Learning from Religion: A Guide to Religion in the Curriculum and Moral Life of Public Schools with Recommendations for Textbook Publishers, School Boards and Educators. |
| INSTITUTION | American Textbook Council, New York, NY. |
| SPONS AGENCY | John Templeton Foundation, Radnor, PA. |
| PUB DATE | 1998-11-00 |
| NOTE | 31p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | American Textbook Council, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 448, New York, NY 10115 ($10). Tel: 212-870-2760; e-mail: atc@columbia.edu. |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC02 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Christianity; Cultural Education; Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; *Ethical Instruction; Judaism; *Moral Issues; *Public Schools; *Religion Studies; Student Needs; Textbook Content |
| IDENTIFIERS | *American Textbook Council; *Character Education |

ABSTRACT

This guide completes a 6-year American Textbook Council project on religion in the schools. An inquiry into textbook content expanded into this exposition on religion, curriculum, and character education. The guide explores the sources of moral instruction in an era when spirituality comes in many forms, and cracks in public culture are apparent. Public schools, like other agencies of culture, have lost the conviction that the universe, nature, existence, and human lives are guided by the "Divine," and the moral force of the curriculum is rarely considered. The guide first poses the problem of what public schools should say and do regarding religion. The importance of religion in schools and trends in textbooks are discussed. Appendixes list basic texts, as well as subjects and themes in U.S. and world history. (Contains 21 endnotes.) (BT)

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# LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION,
# LEARNING FROM RELIGION

A GUIDE TO RELIGION
IN THE CURRICULUM AND MORAL LIFE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WITH RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR TEXTBOOK PUBLISHERS, SCHOOL BOARDS AND EDUCATORS

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By Gilbert T. Sewall

A PUBLICATION OF THE
AMERICAN TEXTBOOK COUNCIL

November 1998

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The American Textbook Council was established in 1988 as an independent national research organization to review social studies textbooks and advance the quality of instructional materials in history. The Council endorses the production of textbooks that embody vivid narrative style, stress significant people and events, and promote better understanding of all cultures, including our own, on the principle that improved textbooks will advance the curriculum, stimulate student learning, and encourage educational achievement for children of all backgrounds. The Council acts as a clearinghouse for information about social studies textbooks and educational publishing in general. It has published numerous history textbook reviews and other curriculum studies. Consulted by educators and policymakers at all levels, it provides detailed information and textbook reviews for individuals and groups interested in improving educational materials.

*Learning about Religion, Learning from Religion*

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> The fact is that, for good or ill, nearly everything in our culture worth transmitting, everything which gives meaning to life, is saturated with religious influences. . . . One can hardly respect a system of education that would leave the student wholly ignorant of the currents of religious thought that move the world society.
>
> -- Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson
> *Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948)

A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN TEXTBOOK COUNCIL

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the Boston University School of Education, where I was a senior research associate in 1996-97. I thank Edwin J. Delattre, William E. Russell and Joan Dee who helped me organize an October 1997 symposium on religion and the public schools, and I thank the many participants who attended the conference for their unique contributions and candid discourse about religion and schooling. In addition to these scholars, a number of leading thinkers about religion, the curriculum, the education of character, and moral excellence patiently reviewed my early drafts and made many suggestions. I am especially grateful to Rodney Atkinson, Robert A. Cole, William Damon, Paul Gagnon, Peter Gibbon, Thomas Lickona, William A. Nord, Stephen Orchard, Robert Royal and Elliott Wright. All of them contributed to the clarity and nuance of this guide. Some may think that I have failed to apprehend or heed their warnings, and none should be held responsible for any lapses herein.

I thank the John Templeton Foundation for its generous support of this project and its program officer, Arthur Schwartz. I owe special tribute to Sir John Templeton, whose insights have profoundly influenced my thought about religion and character and whose ideas about human nature, forgiveness and the good life, both moral and wise, are reflected in the text above. I thank Ernest Rubenstein, George McKenna, and John Fonte for their assistance and expertise as I developed the three appendices. As always, I thank Stapley W. Emberling and Roger W. Smith for their counsel and close attention to text.

G.T.S.
November 1998

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## *1. Introduction*

*Learning about Religion, Learning from Religion* completes a six-year American Textbook Council project on religion in the schools, which first resulted in the 1995 report, ***Religion in the Classroom: What the Textbooks Tell Us***. An inquiry into textbook content expanded into this exposition on religion, curriculum and character education. ***Learning about Religion, Learning from Religion*** explores the sources of moral instruction in an era when spirituality comes in many forms and cracks in public culture are apparent. Our nation's and the world's cultures are infused with religious images, symbols, maxims and insights. Religion's exclusion from the history of human thought and wisdom warps the structure of liberal education. Public schools, like other agencies of culture, have lost the conviction that the universe, nature, existence and human lives are guided by the divine. They have difficulty with the notion of the *sacred*. The moral force of the curriculum is rarely considered. When morality does raise its head in the classroom, the human and communal issues that arise are typically framed in a secular context -- and are to be resolved in a spirit of reason or hygiene.

This short guide reconsiders what schools have to say about our ultimate concerns, to use theologian Paul Tillich's often repeated words. It is ecumenical in spirit, rooted in a broad line of faith outside narrow creeds and ecclesiastical forms. At the same time it affirms Judeo-Christianity in Western culture, not only as a cultural artifact but also as a building block in our civic disposition.

Many Americans will say that curriculum cannot do the work of theology, but they miss the point. History and the humanities can teach wisdom by example. They demark good and bad events, people, trends, and ideas in highly memorable ways. Time and again, when students study the lives of altruistic people, they discover that religion plays a central role in their lives. Why is religion important to individuals and cultures? How can classroom lessons and the "atmosphere" of schools help to bring moral issues into high relief? Walter A. McDougall has spoken of history's moral dimension, and, as McDougall notes, history is the place in the curriculum where students are likely to learn humility and contingency, a set of ethics, a sense of space larger than the self. "Theology used to do that, but in our present era -- and in the public schools especially -- history must do the work of theology," McDougall asserted in a 1998 Foreign Policy Research Institute paper. "It is, for all practical purposes, the religion in the modern curriculum."[1]

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[1] Walter A. McDougall, "The Three Reasons We Teach History," *Footnotes*, vol. 5, no. 1, Foreign Policy Research Institute, February 1998.

In the sciences as well, religion is beginning to get the attention it deserves as a "respectable" subject of inquiry. The questions that used to divide scientists and theologians are less hotly contested. Instead, there seems to be a growing mutual respect between religion and science. A religious perspective can be brought to bear on questions of the universe's ultimate origins; science in turn can increase our sense of religious awe and mystery, whatever one's religion. It can give us a sense of order and beauty in the universe and stimulate philosophical ruminations. Science is often at bottom a search for beauty, truth and meaning. Scientists often ask the same questions as theologians: How did the universe begin? What came before it? What are the origins of human and earthly life? Are natural laws absolute? Why does the physical world seem to be governed by mathematical constants, and what do they tell us about reality?

*Learning about Religion, Learning from Religion* reviews the current status of religion in public schools. It then examines what education about religion means, what it does, and what it might include. It proposes many specific courses of action to advance and sharpen the focus of religion inside and outside the classroom. *Learning about Religion, Learning from Religion*'s appendices contain selected readings and a checklist of religion-related subjects and themes for publishers and educators to consider when trying to improve coverage of religion in the curriculum. In the case of world history especially, we are aware that not all topics can or should be covered in a year-long course; instead, editors and curriculum planners should pick and choose among them.

### *2. The Problem*

Balancing the two clauses in the Constitution's First Amendment -- guarding individual religious liberty and prohibiting the promotion of religion by government -- is one of the most persistent dilemmas in debates about public education. What should teachers and textbooks say about religion in class? Outside of class? In assemblies and school programs? Curriculum is only half of the issue. Should American schools invoke religion to inspire morality? Can they legitimately do so as public institutions? These are some of the most perplexing questions that lie beneath the varnished surface of discourse over "character education."

The character education movement of the last ten years has argued that people of all religions, different faiths, and people of no religious faith, can agree on "core ethical values" such as honesty, justice and a civil society. There are secular "goods" like neatness and punctuality, and we call them "good" because they make life more orderly and civil. Who doesn't endorse the "soft virtues" of tolerance, compassion and respect? But how often do teachers and students connect

them to their religious origins? In public schools today, "increasing cultural pluralism may strain moral education past the breaking point," Robert P. George of Princeton University and the United States Civil Rights Commission noted in summer 1998 commission hearings.

Our secular society diminishes religion's motivating role in defining a moral life. The religious impulse of appreciation and respect for human and earthly life, built on the foundation that we are all agents of God and divine creations, is no longer venerated in public schools. Religion no longer provides an easily agreed upon outline of permissible and unacceptable behavior, a model of character and virtue for all young people, one that is reinforced by law and -- what is more culturally significant -- custom.

Americans support teaching about religion in public schools. They overwhelmingly support character education in schools. When it comes to linking the two, however, they are often uneasy and sometimes even quarrelsome. Most educators avoid the phrase moral education, redolent as it is with religion-based sources of moral authority. Whatever their own beliefs and ethical principles, reflective educators are acutely aware of how easily religion riles administrators and parents. Take something very basic. Teaching the Bible means radically different things to different people. Some Christian literalists would like the Bible used as a history and science textbook, an idea that misconstrues the fields of history and science -- and indeed the Bible. On the other hand, teaching the Gospels and the Miracles *in any form* presents deep problems of faith for many secularly minded teachers, and they cannot or do not want to suspend their deeply felt beliefs.

Morally fastidious educators would all like to see a little bit more good behavior, friendliness and courtesy on campus. Like other solid citizens, they are disturbed by the increased viciousness and selfishness that mark today's culture. These educators worry a great deal about the merry debauch of the entertainment industry -- and its impact on popular values among children and adolescents. Many of them are searching for ways to instill ethical thinking among their students. Some think religion lies at the center of virtuous conduct. Others do not.

Complicating the situation, progressive education takes responsibility for the whole child, intent on instilling a sense of social justice. Trying to alleviate social ills, public schools have created non-academic and health lessons that inevitably touch on spirit and soul. They have introduced numerous "personal development" courses and "prevention and treatment" programs to try to combat bad or self-destructive behavior. Such curricula almost always contain a hidden moral component or subtext. This moral dimension touches on religious beliefs that are strongly felt and non-negotiable. Sex, abstinence, self-esteem, anti-racism, anti-sexual harassment, anti-

drug, and conflict resolution "educations" are just some of the "prevention and treatment programs" crowding into today's school programs. They are part of the expanding affective domain of contemporary education. All of them carry suppositions about ideal behavior and what is "good" and "bad." Given a range of moral sensitivities among parents and school boards, these courses are among the most incendiary parts of the curriculum.

As community values in given localities diverge, public schools have difficulty adhering to a coherent standard of morality among students. Moral relativism disturbs religious people and secular moralists alike, especially when it allows popular culture to disregard (or celebrate) human wickedness. Many parents of different backgrounds are distressed by what seems to be a morally evasive state of public instruction.

Health textbooks and curricula deal with eating smart, staying fit, caring for your mental health, staying drug free, resolving conflicts, understanding your sexual identity, making sexual decisions, protecting the natural environment, and building a caring community. They take a barren, mechanistic view of human life, one that revolves around health tips and self-esteem. In much of the public mind, the issue of moral education is entirely confused with sexuality, and the curricular swamp of contemporary sex education is vast, attracting a vocal spectrum of educational reformers who have passionate, deeply conflicting opinions about abortion, homosexuality, premarital sexuality, and marriage. What grabs headlines and paralyzes school boards, however, does not reflect the real range of moral challenges that students and teachers face everyday, for example, bullying and cruelty, anger and lying, vanity and snobbery.

### *3. Trends in Textbooks*

Coverage of religion in history, social studies and humanities textbooks shrank from the 1960s to the 1980s. New spiritual elixirs based in the human potential movement surfaced in values education and personal development courses. In response to complaints about the loss of religious content in the curriculum[2] and concerned by the moral subtexts of new personal development courses, the American Textbook Council began to analyze and evaluate the content of leading history, civics and health textbooks, curriculum frameworks, and personal development course guides.

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[2] Beginning with Paul Vitz's study, *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks*, Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1986. This widely reported research was followed by the California History-Social Science Framework (1987), then by Charles C. Haynes and Warren A. Nord's pointed essays in *Social Education* and other educational publications and statements of concern about the disappearance of religion in the curriculum by secularist organizations including People for the American Way before 1991.

The Council's 1995 report, *Religion in the Classroom: What the Textbooks Tell Us*, concluded that coverage of religion in history textbooks had increased -- even though the results were sometimes spotty and poorly conceived -- in part as publishers reacted to widespread and multivalent criticism of lapsed religious scope and content.[3] In the late 1990s the expansion and improvement of religious content in history and social studies textbooks are evident. Publishers continue to expand the coverage of Judeo-Christian and non-Western religions, in part because of increasing pressure from influential state frameworks and standards, several of which have been revised to lengthen and improve the story of religion.

Still, in social studies and civics, the overwhelming thematic foundation in the curriculum is caution about "a wall of separation of church and state," invoking Thomas Jefferson's 1802 phrase, but not explaining the role of religion in Europe and America during the preceding two centuries, nor the role of religion in the nation's founding and Constitution.[4] Many U.S. history textbooks portray religion as a "repressive" or "backward" force in the nation's past and in recent history as well. In many high school United States history courses, students encounter religion in only two instances: when they study the Puritans and during the Scopes Trial. In both cases, Christianity is likely to be presented as a negative phenomenon, something dark and superstitious, a cultural force leading to intolerance and witch hunts, or to irrational refutation of science and evolutionary theory. Fearing that public school instructors will take a hostile view of historical Christianity or be ignorant of any world religion whatsoever, some conservative Christians have actually objected to any teaching about religion in social studies courses or other parts of the curriculum.

In 1995 the Council's reviewers were dismayed that personal development, psychology and health courses often substitute for actual history and civics courses today -- and by how they describe the role of religion in modern American society and individual lives. These non-historical social studies curricula, proliferating in public schools, are designed to counteract social problems and bad behavior. They tend to dispense advice that is indifferent to or at odds with religious tradition. The 1995 report concluded that "non-historical social studies" and "health" textbooks advocate alternative or self-determined ways of living, thinking and acting that probably *impede* character development. What health, psychology and personal development textbooks in particular fail to describe or analyze are the reasons that religion seems to inform the lives of people of all

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[3] Gilbert T. Sewall, *Religion in the Classroom: What the Textbooks Tell Us*, New York: American Textbook Council, 1995.

[4] See James A. Hutson, *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic* (foreword by Jaroslav Pelikan), Washington: Library of Congress, 1998, 85, 92-93. Christian activists have taken an extravagantly broad interpretation of Hutson's textual reading of this so-called Danbury letter, where the phrase originates.

ages who are searching for something to believe in; for a life that is more noble, more enduring, and bigger than the self; for something that gives meaning to being. When these textbooks deal with ideals of individual behavior and character, they try to put religion in a contemporary frame and context, relating it mainly to ends such as caring, wellness and self-esteem. The results are fatuous and sometimes offensive. According to *Holt Health*, for example, one of the most widely used textbooks in the nation:

> Many people find that having a spiritual life -- a sense of connection with something greater than oneself -- helps them get through times of great stress. Some people believe in a supreme being who provides comfort and guidance during hard times. And some people feel a strong connection with nature, which gives them a feeling of peace and a sense that they are part of a beautiful world. These are both ways of having a spiritual life. There are numerous other ways, perhaps as many as there are people. Organized religions can help people deal with stress not only by offering spiritual guidance, but also by helping people feel part of a community. In this way, members of churches, synagogues, and other religious communities may find the support group they need to cope with the stressors in their lives.[5]

Thus, this text reflects a modern, hygienic view of spiritual welfare, an ontological outlook vested in support groups and stress reduction, whereby religion is reduced to a "support group," perhaps one of use for young people who are trying to "cope with the stressors in their lives." Such advice is more than vulgar: it is diminishing to the human spirit and morally corrosive in its vision.

### *4. Public Schools Today*

The strength of the nation's religious -- and more specifically Christian -- impulse is often overestimated. The percentage of Americans who describe themselves as Christians is falling, and among Christians today, there is no agreement on theology. Many Americans of Christian heritage are not at all observant. For many people Christmas has become an entirely secular event of family celebration and gift giving. The gulf between liberal and conservative Protestantism is vast -- and growing -- in matters of love, virtue and morality.

Whereas a strong Protestant ethic was once ingrained in the curriculum and moral life of public schools, the secular establishment that administers the nation's 16,000 school districts finds it difficult to conduct any school-based discussion of religion's place in the moral life of schools or human life at all. For many religious Americans, the failure of public institutions to acknowledge

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[5] Jerrold Greenberg et al., *Holt Health*, Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1994, 206-208.

the blessings that flow from God, and God alone, means that, as individuals and as a society, we fail. Since public schools used to acknowledge these blessings and no longer do, these religious Americans think, the nation's educational system is complicit in sacrilege and moral decline.

It's not that religion is *persona non grata* in schools. In primary grades and beyond, most or all students encounter right and wrong in literary stories that have sacred themes. As they should: literary stories provide neutral territory for the classroom exploration of religious and related moral issues from a relatively young age. The Supreme Court consistently has upheld and even recommended that teaching about religion be included in the school curriculum. Justice Tom Clark said thirty-five years ago that "one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization." In a concurring opinion in the same case, Justice William Brennan held that "whether or not the Bible is involved, it would be impossible to teach meaningfully many subjects in the social sciences or the humanities without some mention of religion."[6]

But in practice, on all matters of religion and to an ever greater degree on matters of religious-based morality, caution characterizes public education. While it is "legal" to teach about religion, and in limited ways acknowledge religious practice, lawful distinctions have grown complicated, and legal hairsplitting is the rule. Litigators may stand ready to attack when any religious-inspired moral credo or symbol rears its head in a school, no matter how basic, e.g., the maxims of the Proverbs, or traditional, e.g., sacred Christian music at the winter holidays.[7] Furthermore, if the nation's Judeo-Christian moral traditions cannot be invoked as a supreme -- or even provisional -- authority of ethical action, if they have no legal majesty, then moral education as it has been known for centuries is in a bind. What then are to be the foundations of authority in moral affairs, common education, and civil society?

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[6] *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp* (1963).

[7] The secular establishment is comfortable with statements about conservative Christians that, were they directed at other identity groups, would be construed as "insensitive" or worse. George R. Kaplan, "Shotgun Wedding: Notes on Public Education's Encounter With the New Christian Right," *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 1994, accused conservative Christians of links to explicitly racist or "Aryan" groups and individuals, sniffed at "the Christian Right's longtime preoccupations with clean living, solid academic grounding, and respect for the family," and dismissed its vision of moral education tritely as "a strident voice in favor of a turn-back-the-clock orthodoxy." Kaplan's suggested defense strategy against this danger on the right was further empowerment of People for the American Way, the American Library Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Institute for First Amendment Studies, the National Center for Science Education, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Americans for Religious Liberty. Kaplan concluded: "Unless and until this backing [for such organizations] materializes and becomes a permanent feature of the educational landscape, the promoters of reactionary political causes and outdated educational doctrine will continue their advance in the nation's schools."

Three decades ago, court cases such as *Engle v. Vitale* (school prayer) and *Tinker v. Des Moines* (student rights) began to alter and question traditional symbols, sources of authority, and juvenile-adult relationships, including those that had religious or quasi-religious aspects. Many moral educators adopted sixties-style models of social justice, human potential, and values clarification, sometimes all at once. As a result, in many classrooms today, there is little discussion of virtue and vice, or good and evil, unless evil is couched in terms of social afflictions such as intolerance, racism, sexism or anti-environmentalism. The disciplines of history, theology and philosophy -- once at the core of the humanities and liberal education -- have little or no place in teacher education. More than a few teachers -- especially those with backgrounds in sociology and educational psychology -- think of themselves as facilitators and therapists. In an effort to sidestep religion and its expression, school districts occasionally go to absurd extremes, as in the case of a 1997 New Jersey district proposal to retitle Valentine's Day as Special Persons Day.

In the past decade, educators and policymakers have agreed that public schools can and should strengthen classroom teaching about religion and its function in human affairs. Several national organizations have constructed action plans and programmatic guides. The 1998 publication of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and First Amendment Center, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*, written by Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, is welcome evidence of a rising consensus and progress as educators rethink religion in classrooms.[8]

Yet wanting to make adjustments and actually doing so are two separate things. It is easy to nod heads around a table and agree that teaching about religion is a good thing. But when the view of religion becomes more than clinical or sociological, First Amendment organizations are likely to step in, armed by legal interpretations and alarmed that in some way, in any way, education and religion might co-mingle. Students and teachers today come from different religious backgrounds. Many have highly secular upbringings. They may have had little experience with religion themselves.

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[8] Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum*, Alexandria and Nashville: First Amendment Center and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998. See also *The Williamsburg Charter*, 1988; Center for Civic Education, *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education*, 1991; Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, *Finding Common Ground*, 1994; and Institute for American Values, *A Call to Civil Society: Why Democracy Needs Moral Truths*, 1998. The most extensive – and for the specialist, invaluable – curriculum guides to religious education come from the United Kingdom, where religion is a mandated subject and thus developed unit of the curriculum. See *Model Syllabuses* "Living Faiths Today" and "Questions and Teachings" published by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (45 Notting Hill Gate, London UK W11 3JB). A program to reconcile Classical and Christian education is available: Gene Edward Veith, Jr., and Andrew Kern, *Classical Education: Towards the Revival of American Schooling*, Washington, D.C.: Capital Research Center, 1997.

One Massachusetts-based teacher, based on twenty-five years experience in a suburban district, has remarked:

> The easiest thing is to back away from the issue of religion altogether. There is no support system in place in the schools of education, in academic lounges, in the public schools themselves, anywhere, to help young teachers if they wished to tackle the subject of religion. . . . No help from their own academic environment. The topic can be dangerous for teachers: parental blow-back, special interest groups in the community.

A colleague of his added:

> If a teacher can keep the peace in class and have all the kids from different religious backgrounds "make nice" with each other, then that teacher believes he has done his job.

In the United States today, many or most educators take a utilitarian view of student behavior: "We surely don't want young people running around in destructive groups. We don't want them into drugs, alcohol, or crime. We don't want them teasing others, speaking disrespectfully, withdrawing from their families, or cheating on their schoolwork," said a 1990 ASCD guide to moral education, advising a spirit of relativism and student choice as means. This guide asserted that the best way for students to develop a moral sense was by through cooperative learning; discovery methods; active learning modes as opposed to less active work on paper; peer teaching modes; and "methods that give students responsibility for choosing how much to learn, in what way to learn, what parts of a topic to learn, or in what order to learn something."[9]

Progressive dicta about open pedagogy, expressive individuality, and free-form character have lost a great deal of their energy. For educators seriously interested in character, only a few years later, they appear to be therapeutic confections designed to evade distinctions of excellence, virtue or personal habit. Mainstream character education -- institutionalized in the Washington, D.C.-based Character Education Partnership (CEP) in 1992 -- recognizes that right and wrong do exist and that educators must teach children to know the difference. "Concerned about the moral crisis confronting America's youth," the CEP stands for civic virtue, compassion, and responsibility. It worries about the nation's "moral health."

"What is new -- and hopeful -- is the trend toward community rediscovering consensual values that make character education possible in our public schools," Thomas Lickona has said. "In a growing number of communities and school districts, schools and families are re-establishing

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[9] Merrill Harmin, *How to Plan a Program in Moral Education*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1990, 7ff.

their historical partnership to teach a common set of virtues such as respect, responsibility, honesty, fairness, and kindness."[10]

But representing the nation's largest and farthest reaching educational associations, the CEP avoids religion in its statements and objectives about school activities, separating from education the aspect of human life that has traditionally provided foundations of "moral health." William Damon has observed that in order to flourish, children must move beyond their egoistic desires to "acquire a living sense of what some religious traditions have called *transcendence*." But this is hampered, Damon says, by the "movement to remove from non-denominational settings everywhere all forms of religious display," and the "anxiety or scorn" of educators.[11] An apparent outcome, Damon's research and other studies suggest, is the reign of self-indulgence, coupled in many social settings to an "antinomian" or "outlaw" culture that many Americans recognize but do not know how to counteract, at least in public agencies like schools.

### *5. Morality, Education and Religion*

The question of whether religion is essential to morality is an unsettled one. The moral sense is a function of the "instincts and habits of a lifetime, founded in nature, developed in the family, and reinforced by quite secular fears of earthly punishment and social ostracism. Habituation, as Aristotle said, is the source of most of the moral virtues," James Q. Wilson has asserted. "Religion is for many a source of solace and for a few a means of redemption, but if everyday morality had depended on religious conviction, the human race would have destroyed itself eons ago."[12] Other cultural critics think that consideration of life, destiny, human purpose and the nature of "good" in purely secular ways may be impossible. Peter L. Berger has said: "For the vast majority of people, today as always in human history, the ground of their morality is religious."[13]

Why have educational theorists aggressively tried to eradicate the religious impulse that provided an ethical dimension to American schooling? Scientism, secular efforts at human

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[10] For background to these remarks, see Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*, New York: Bantam Books, 1991.

[11] William Damon. *Greater Expectations: Overcoming the Culture of Indulgence in America's Homes and Schools*, New York: Free Press, 1995, 81.

[12] James Q. Wilson. *The Moral Sense*, New York: Free Press, 1993, 220. Wilson and other social scientists *do* acknowledge the utilitarian power of religion in sustaining a society's "moral capital" – and the problematic depletion of "moral capital" in secular society.

[13] Peter L. Berger, "Salvation Through Sociology," *The New York Times Book Review*, October 22, 1989.

redemption, values clarification theories, and excessive respect for the diversity movement[14] are all part of the answer. Many legal scholars, educators and lay citizens have immense difficulty with the idea of basic God-given authority embodied in the Ten Commandments, and the Supreme Court has effectively banned their presence in classrooms.[15] Since the Ten Commandments were the foundation of moral teaching and instruction in the Judeo-Christian tradition for over three thousand years, and have been deemed legally inappropriate as moral creeds asserted by public schools, it is doubtful that any religion-based code of moral conduct in schools can stand the test of modernity.

Moral education concerns learning about good conduct, including manners and thoughtfulness. It is about the development of character, the stable qualities of a person that are revealed in actions. Frequently, people adopt a simplistic view of morality. They think it concerns only lying, cheating or sexual misbehavior whereas in fact it encompasses as well positive duties toward one's self and others. Religious or not, moral standards affirm our human dignity and rights, allow us to treat others as we wish to be treated, enable us to lead a fulfilling life, and make possible a democratic and civilized culture. Parents are the first moral educators of a child, something that is as true at school as at home. All parents, as moral educators, should be sensitive to common sense and developmental psychology: different kinds of moral explanations make sense to children at different stages of maturity. Then come the schools. Moral education is often taught by example. Children imitate the attitudes that adults display around them. Public schools cannot be expected to inculcate and enforce ideals of character that are at variance with the dominant values of the community, or in a spiritually fragmented culture.[16]

School-based behavioral problems with a moral dimension that educators try to solve with counseling -- laziness, promiscuity, or drug addiction, for example -- involve the issue of human worth. Theft, vandalism, bullying, cruelty and violence -- and kindness -- have everything to do

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[14] One standard argument against the preferred presence of Judeo-Christian religion in the curriculum states that such monoculturalism is insensitive to school children of non-Western "cultures of origin." The opposite view holds that the great majority of U.S. schoolchildren except in isolated districts are not from foreign cultures, and that even if they are, they should learn about the majoritarian foundations of American values. It submits that on account of multiculturalism's fixation with cultural equivalency, and own ambivalence about the Western heritage, the majority is disenfranchised in tax-supported agencies of learning.

[15] *Stone v. Graham* (1980).

[16] A 1989 U. S. Department of Education conference on moral education under the direction of Bruno Manno concluded: "The Supreme Court has made a Constitutional distinction between teaching religion and teaching about religion. Teaching about religion is constitutional, but in practice it may be difficult to do one and not the other." See also William K. Kilpatrick, *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993; Kevin Ryan and Edward A. Wynne (foreword by James S. Coleman), *Reclaiming Our Schools: A Handbook on Teaching Character, Academics, and Discipline*, New York: Merrill, 1993.

with the Golden Rule. Humane impulses such as protecting the weak or giving thanks for earthly gifts have a religious foundation. Virtues such as mercy, charity, forgiveness, humility and modesty, as most Americans understand them, are deeply rooted in religious teachings of right and wrong. Learning from religion includes understanding why these ideals and the systems of belief behind them have moved, aroused and inspired great and ordinary people since time immemorial.

### *6. Why Is the Study of Religion in Schools Important?*

Religion has a place in human life in all eras and cultures, including our own. As C. Frederick Risinger has stated,[17] current public disputes in this nation and crises affecting the world's peoples require an understanding of religion's force in human life.

Concepts in modern history such as nationalism, imperialism, anti-colonialism, slavery and anti-slavery, freedom of conscience, and capitalism have religious aspects. The bloody and seemingly insoluble conflict in the Balkans has its roots in a centuries-long conflict between Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims, for example. Conflicts persist among people of different religions that are not conflicts over religious ideas per se. For example, religious differences in Northern Ireland have evolved into bitter economic and social class distinctions. Resentment of past political and economic imperialism provides fuel for Islamic fundamentalism from Morocco to Afghanistan. Religion has shaped the recent history of Poland and Iran, for example. Political conflicts between India and Pakistan stem in part from historical enmity between Hindus and Muslims. Contemporary arguments in the United States over human and civil rights, environmentalism and social harmony all have a religious dimension, even when the discourse is couched in secular terms.

In what ways can schools and textbooks best treat "sensitive" topics such as the conflict between Christianity and Islam or Roman Catholicism and Protestantism? Anti-Semitism in European history, culminating in the Holocaust of World War II? How best can students study the influence of Darwin, Marx and Freud in modern life and the religious response to modernity, both progressive and fundamentalist? How do educators and students address the seeming contradiction between the religious value of love and the hate that some religious groups have for those who are not like them?

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[17] C. Frederick Risinger, "Religion in the Social Studies Curriculum," ERIC Digest (ED363553), August 1993.

These are among the most vexing questions that educators face when they encounter religion in politics and culture, and of course, there are no narrowly gauged answers here or elsewhere. Formal and informal discussion -- not evasion -- of these subjects is likely to expand student understanding of the power and role of religion in human life. But education in religion is much more than the study of history, civics and current events. Religions do nothing less than construct the metaphysical and moral foundations of civilizations. They have provided "guidance" and "paths" to the good life since the dawn of civilization. One traditional domain of religion is to define good and evil. Religions have an age-old record of providing a moral compass and dispensing satisfying wisdom to young and old people alike.

Universal human worth and dignity, loving your neighbor, the Golden Rule: These are concepts that lie at the center of civilized behavior -- and they are at the heart of the religious domain. That such important dimensions of inquiry have been nearly driven from education or given odd contemporary makeovers should concern everyone. Americans have to ask themselves: What happens to a society when the religious foundation of morality and character ceases to be part of school life -- even becomes an embarrassment or taboo?

Students can and should learn about the religion-based gratitude and humility, feeling and action that have fortified many different generations and cultures. Great thinkers of the modern era have expressed the wondrous nature of life with much passion. "The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead," said the great physicist Albert Einstein. The Harvard University philosopher George Santayana observed: "The universe, as far as we can observe it, is a wonderful and immense engine. . . . If we dramatize its life and conceive its spirit, we are filled with wonder, terror and amusement, so magnificent is that spirit."

The esteemed physician and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer noted: "To educate yourself for the feeling of gratitude means to take nothing for granted, whatever it may be, but always to seek out and value the kind will that stands behind the action. Constrain yourself to measure everything good that is done for you as a matter of course. Everything originates in a will for the good which is directed at you. If you try seriously and continuously to educate yourself for the feeling of gratitude, your stubborn human nature will cause you or no one trouble." This kind of feeling stands in contrast to the assertiveness of the self-esteem movement and the expressive individualism of contemporary culture.

Humility is a misunderstood and underrated concept in modern Western culture. It is often confused with subordination, low self-esteem and a sense of inferiority. It may be suited to life in a monastery, some may believe, but in the "real" world, a person has to assert himself. In our society self-confidence and aggressiveness are held to be virtues; humility is considered to be a weakness. Properly conceived, humility is an appropriate response to understanding that the vastness and complexity of the universe demand modesty on the part of the thinking individual.

In those classrooms and schools that have embraced the self-esteem movement, the reverse mindset is often true. Young people are encouraged to be self-expressive, assertive, exhibitionistic and even rebellious on the theory that individual "empowerment" advances individual satisfaction and happiness. But what then becomes of the virtues of modesty, reserve, self-restraint and quiet reflection?

In considering the moral realm and the education of character then, educators might ask: Why are modesty, decorousness and restraint traits of character that many cultures (including our own) have traditionally held in high regard? Why do most cultures seek out these qualities in their sages and religious leaders -- and hold them as ideals of the good life?

The questions that cluster around religions are basic: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be good? What must we know? How shall we live? These are among the "eternal questions children ask more intensely, unremittingly, and subtly than we sometimes imagine," psychologist Robert Coles has noted.[18] Metaphysics may begin with questions about the self -- the "I" -- that students ask perennially and at all levels of learning:

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| *origins*: | How did I get here? |
| *identity*: | How do I find the authentic me? |
| *destiny*: | Where am I going? |
| *morals*: | How do I decide what is right? |
| *values*: | What matters most to me? |
| *meaning*: | Do I have any significance? |

[18] Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990, 37.

If students start asking such questions, they will almost certainly turn in part to religious sources that offer some answers. It is difficult to reflect on the accumulated religious wisdom of the centuries without experiencing some deepened sense of personal meaning and purpose.

Learning from religion involves getting beyond "I," of course, and progressing toward such lines of thought as Schweitzer's musings. It exposes a young person to what sages and saints have said about the good life and the life well lived, not only how to achieve it but how to avoid the manifold temptations that imperil the journey toward it. While religious education must always be distinguished from induction into a religious faith, students who study religion will confront:

- concepts of God, which are fundamental to most forms of religious belief and significant to most of the world's religions,
- the significance of spiritual leaders and sacred texts,
- the concept of living a faith rather than merely assenting to it,
- the concept of life as a gift and a journey.

Religion involves the education of character in different ways. For young people, there is no better way to introduce moral themes and the subject of virtue than through stories.[19] Take one story from Greek mythology, one rich in ethical dimensions. The youthful Hercules, before deciding how to shape his life, goes into the wilderness and at a crossroads meets two beautiful women. One of them, Arete, is elegant and modest in her appearance and demeanor. The other, Kakia, is sensually dressed. She tells him of a life of pleasure and indulgence, living off other people, of never experiencing toil. Arete declares that the gods never give good without suffering. Those who follow her may have moderate enjoyments, not luxuries for which they have not worked. In Arete's world: The old are honored by the young, they together celebrate the achievements of the past, and they tackle with vigor the problems of the present. Hercules' choice is not imposed externally. He chooses the High Road, not the Low Road. His preference then is for challenge and "hard living."[20]

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[19] Thus, the grass-roots popularity of William J. Bennett, ed., *The Book of Virtues*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993; see also William K. Kilpatrick et al., *Books That Build Character: A Guide to Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, an excellent guide to the terrain.

[20] This version is told in Peter France, *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1996, 9-10.

What's going on in this story, and what is its "moral"? What do we mean when we say, "taking the high road," and why do variations of this story appear and reappear in diverse literature? How have various religions and Judeo-Christian scripture been informed by stories and examples like this, by the example of Jesus? How does the Hercules' story bear resemblance to the Gospels and to the Temptations of Buddha, to the great moral tales of Prometheus and Faust? What common human experiences give rise to questions of meaning and purpose? How are these insights applied to the personal search for identity and significance? What does it mean to be human? Such questions lie at the heart of wisdom and knowledge.

### *7. Beyond the Curriculum*

The curriculum has moral force, and ethical delicacy in the arts and letters may depend on certain affective sentiments. What a culture holds to be exemplary and dismisses as dishonorable or deplorable -- as well as the reasons for those distinctions -- will be reflected in its literary choices, its master narratives, and its heroic ideals. Because many Americans consider morality closely related to formal religion, the issues we encounter in learning from religion out of necessity extend beyond the curriculum, into the soul of institutional life. When we use the word *ethos* to identify an ineffable but crucial aspect of schooling, we mean the distinguishing sentiments and guiding beliefs of an institution; how it develops individual character and conscience, formally and informally; the habits and rituals that contribute to its communal tone. Though religion, students:

- Encounter the *natural world*: wonder at its vastness, complexity, and beauty; fear of the power of natural forces when they are unleashed in destructive ways; curiosity about its workings; a sense of dependence upon it for food and other resources; and experience of human and earthly life.

- Encounter the *cultural world*: not only those things which are narrowly thought of as "culture" -- art, architecture, music, literature, and so on -- but the culture of our times in the widest sense, and perhaps especially the culture of the technological age with all the potential for good and evil which arises from unprecedented human power to control nature.

- Encounter the *moral world*: the sources of compassion; respect for other people; noble, pure, decent and charitable actions that make individuals feel good about themselves and well-disposed toward others, in contrast to base feelings and behavior, including the "deadly" sins of pride, lust, gluttony, sloth, avarice, envy and anger; a world of mind and habit that advances mercy, service and temperance.

Educators often make reference to common values at work in everyday lives. But they rarely give formal evidence or emphasis as to where these values come from, how they are embodied in the political and constitutional foundations of the nation, and why such values might have an authority that supersedes individual preference and will. Conventions permit a teacher to state that moral behavior may have values in common with religious doctrine, and no more. There is no suggestion or affirmation that these values have sacred roots.

Still, all Americans should remember, there are more points of convergence between camps than some secular activists and religious groups would believe. As Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes have affirmed, the pendulum of curriculum reform is swinging today in the direction of religion: in many enlightened school districts, teachers are working together to resolve differences and find civil commonality in sacred wisdom. Accordingly, and in this spirit of consensus, it may be concluded that in learning about religion, learning from religion:

(1) *Students should learn that religious people differ in the details of their beliefs and that these differences have exerted a vast influence on the course of world affairs past and present.* Students should learn that Christianity is one of the world's great religions, of special significance in the nation's settlement, history, civics and culture; that in doctrine and theology, Christianity differs from other religions, which in turn differ among themselves. They should learn that the Judeo-Christian religious heritage has provided a moral template for the nation and that its history cannot be understood without exploration of religious imperatives and ideals in American life. They should understand that the Bible has played a formative role in the development of Western letters, history, law, economics, fine arts and music in ways that the Koran and other sacred books have not. When they can understand such matters, students should learn and know that Christianity is one of many religions in past and present world affairs that contest the territory of spirituality and claim absolute truth. They should know that there are systems of belief and morality with non-religious sources. An educated person may or may not be a believer but should acknowledge, understand and respect religious traditions.

(2) *Educators should encourage children of all backgrounds to imagine life as something more than material and should help them understand why religion is a living force in many individual lives.* Teachers should respect moral imperatives with religious origins inside and outside the classroom. They should help children and young adults see that it is legitimate to have religion-based convictions and display sensitivity toward children who have them. Scripture, memoirs, literary works, histories, and the arts and letters provide rich sources of moral instruction; they consider temptations, evils and ethical dilemmas that people have faced since time

immemorial and that children themselves cannot avoid. In examining moral issues, sacred texts and other documents from many cultures lead inevitably toward class consideration of "perennial questions" that each generation must ask anew. Very possibly such thought and study will elicit and stimulate enriched understanding of universal moral ideals.

(3) *Educators can and should make religious-based insights as to being, meaning and purpose more integral to character education.* If an adult generation abdicates its own moral authority, children will not move naturally toward virtue, possessed of a magic compass. Given today's celebrity role models, they may do exactly the reverse. Educators who are interested in ethics, morality and character should respect religion-based scruples and help children understand how these scruples are likely to improve self-respect, attitude and achievement.

From religions come age-old knowledge of human experience: commentaries of how sages in and before the present era have dealt with the most difficult issues of community and individual life. Religions affirm human altruism, moral responsibility, natural laws and rights, and universal dignity. They help show us how to treat others as we wish to be treated. By defining and promoting basic aspects of character, including civility, kindness and service, what religions offer advances the heart and spirit.

* * *

Why will religion almost certainly persist in the public imagination, providing a frame for moral education and the construction of character in the future? Why will religion provide answers that stretch far beyond morality into the essence of life and humanness? More than two decades ago, Daniel Bell wrote that religion is:

> a constitutive part of man's consciousness: the cognitive search for the pattern of the "general order" of existence; the affective need to establish rituals and to make such conceptions sacred; the primordial need for relatedness to some others, or to a set of meanings which will establish a transcendent response to the self; and the existential need to confront the finalities of suffering and death.[21]

Since then, America's educators have in limited ways tried to embrace and rethink the place of religion in classrooms. They have begun to strengthen a part of education that textbook publishers and school boards enfeeble at great risk to domestic tranquillity.

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[21] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books, 1976, 169.

## *READINGS AND CURRICULUM*

## APPENDIX A

### *Basic Texts*

Scripture

Bible (Judeo-Christianity)
- Genesis
- Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 1-17 and Deut. 5: 6-21)
- Prophets: Jeremiah, Isaiah, Amos
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Gospel (e.g., Sermon on the Mount and other Parables)

Koran (Islam)
Analects (Confucianism)
Dhammapada (Buddhism)
Bhagavad Gita (Hinduism)

Philosophy, Religion and the Western Tradition

Aesop, *Fables*
Plato, Myth of the Cave, Book VII of *The Republic*
Aristotle, *Ethics* and *Politics*
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
St. Augustine, *Confessions*
John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*
Voltaire, *Candide*
C.S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man*
George Orwell, *Animal Farm*
T. S. Eliot, "Notes toward the Definition of a Culture"

Religion in America

John Winthrop, "Model of Christian Charity"
George Washington, "Farewell Address"
Thomas Jefferson, "Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty," and "Letter to the Danbury Church"
James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance"
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address" and "Second Inaugural Address"
Populist Platform (1892) and Progressive Party Platform (1916)
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

# APPENDIX B

## *Subjects and Themes*

## United States History

### *Pre-Columbian America and Colonial Period*

- Protestant movements in Europe, the wars of religion, and the search for religious liberty.
- Puritanism and religious non-conformism in New England. Mayflower Compact as a political model. Massachusetts Bay Colony and the "City on a Hill."
- Role of Roger Williams and other religious dissenters.
- Establishment of Anglican and Roman Catholic colonies, e.g. Virginia, Maryland.
- The broadened concept of religious freedom in the 17th and 18th centuries.
- Lives of colonial leaders such as William Bradford, William Penn, and Jonathan Edwards.
- Catholicism in Santa Fe, Saint Augustine, and Alta California. Life of Junipero Serra, the creation of missions and the conversion of Los Indios.
- Native American religions and creation myths.

### *Constitution and Early Republic*

- Basic civil rights, including freedom of religion. First Amendment protections.
- Linkage of early 19th century religious revivals, cultural activities, and social reform movements.
- Decline of Puritanism and increased Revivalism. Second Great Awakening: role of Methodists and Baptists.
- Transcendentalism, Universalism, and the Boston Utopians.
- Western missionary movements, e.g., Whitman Mission and Mormon migration. Religion and Manifest Destiny.

*Abolitionism, Civil War and Reconstruction*

- Christianity's influence on Abolitionists, the Underground Railroad, and Civil War leaders. Influence of books and anthems, e.g., Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic."
- Role of religious groups in providing aid to freed slaves and displaced whites after the Civil War.

*Immigration*

- Increased Catholic immigration from Ireland, Italy and Eastern Europe from the 1840s to 1920s. Jewish immigration after 1900.
- Reaction: Protestant nativism from the Know Nothings to the Ku Klux Klan.

*Progressive Movement*

- Role of religious groups in organizing private charities and settlement houses, women's suffrage, and the temperance movement. Eighteenth Amendment and Prohibition.
- Rise of liberal Protestantism and the "social gospel."

*Religion and Modern America*

- Fundamentalism and the Scopes Trial.
- Religious aspects of post-World War II civil rights movement.
- Continuing arguments and counterarguments over religion in public life. Disputes between secularists, theological liberals and religious conservatives.
- Increased activity of Protestant fundamentalists in politics.

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# APPENDIX C

## *Subjects and Themes*

## World History

### *Ancient World Religions*

- Egyptian polytheism.
- Origins of the Hebrews in Canaan and Egypt. Exodus and role of Moses. Mosaic Law and ethical monotheism. Development of Judaism. Reigns of David and Solomon. Old Testament.
- Origins of Hinduism. Teachings of *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*. Concepts such as *karma* and *dharma*; role of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma in Hindu culture.
- Origins of Buddhism. Life of Gautama Buddha. Teachings such as Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Differences between Hinduism and Buddhism. Reign of Ashoka and spread of Buddhism.
- Reasons for decline of Buddhism and Hindu revival.
- Influence of Confucianism on Chinese ideals, such as family, wisdom, benevolence and courage. *Analects*. Concept of mandate of heaven.
- Spread of Buddhism to China, Japan and southeast Asia; its philosophical, cultural, linguistic and artistic influence on East Asia. Differences between Confucianism and Buddhism.
- Pre-Columbian America: nature of Aztec, Mayan and Incan religions. North American Indian creation myths.

### *Greek and Roman Civilization*

- Spread and influence of Greek religion, ideas, language and culture in the Mediterranean and beyond from the 5th century B.C.
- Rise of the idea of imperial divinity in later Roman Empire.

*Christianity*

- Life of Jesus. The New Testament. Christian ideas of universal human worth, justice, charity, mercy and hope. Concepts of immortality, judgment, heaven and hell, and grace.
- Movement of Christianity from the eastern Mediterranean to the west, and role of the Evangelists and Apostles, including Paul. Peter and the establishment of the Roman church in 1st century.
- Jewish revolt against Roman imperial authority and the Diaspora.
- Relationship between Christianity and imperial authority. Role of Christian martyrs and impact of the persecutions of Diocletian.
- Conversion of Constantine in 4th century. St. Augustine: the concept of the heavenly and earthly cities.
- Church councils, the canonization of the Bible, and the development of creeds and orthodoxy in the Western church before the 6th century.

*Islam and Islamic Civilization*

- Life of Muhammad. Hegira and Koran. Five Pillars of Islam. Relationship between Islamic theology and law. Islam's relationship to Judaism and Christianity.
- Islam's rapid movement to Europe, Africa and Central Asia from the 7th century. Islam's impact on geopolitics and the Mediterranean for eight centuries.
- Spread of Islamic culture and Arabic language, and influence on government and commerce, science and philosophy, religion and law. Role of Islamic and Jewish scholars in preserving Greek and Roman learning in the West.
- Revival of Islam after 1300. Muslim expansion into Byzantium: Turkish conquest of Balkans, Hungary, Asia Minor, Northern Africa, and Arabia. Muslim expansion into India: Delhi Sultanate and Mughal empire in 16th century. Muslim conversions and clashes between Muslims, Hindus and other religious groups. Expansion of Muslim culture into western and eastern Africa.
- Struggle between Christians and Muslims: Portuguese and Spanish *reconquista* from the 8th to 15th century. Crusades in the western and eastern Mediterranean. Moorish and Jewish expulsions from Iberia in 1492. Global resistance to Islamic incursions.

*Medieval Europe*

- Rising church power and papal authority in the western empire during the 4th century. Loss of centralized government and bishops' assumption of civil powers.
- Conversion of Germans, Slavs and Scandinavians to Christianity.
- Examination of monasticism and its significance in medieval life. Cultural role of Benedictines, Cistercians and other monastic orders.
- Investiture controversy between secular and ecclesiastical authority. Idea of limited political authority and of higher law.
- Recovery of Greek and Roman learning in the 12th century. Rise of universities. Scholasticism and the effort to reconcile Christianity and Antiquity. Significance of Thomas Aquinas and the idea of natural law.
- Establishment of Constantinople in the 4th century. Differences in language, extent of church authority, and degree of imperial power compared to Western empire. Reasons for and impact of the split between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox church.

*Religious Conflict in Europe (1500-1700)*

- Growing anti-papal sentiment after 1500, especially in German states, culminating in rejection of papal authority and creation of new Protestant denominations with new theologies.
- Spread of Protestant reformation in northern Europe. Role of clerical leaders, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin.
- Catholic response and Counter-Reformation. Significance of the Council of Trent. Revival of Rome and founding of the Society of Jesus. Life of Ignatius Loyola. The Inquisition. Influence of the Jesuits, Franciscans and other Catholic missionaries in Americas and Asia.
- Establishment of Church of England by Henry VIII. Elizabethan Compromise.
- Absolute monarchy and the theory of divine right.
- Settlement of North America by religious dissenters, including Puritans.
- Continental wars of religion. France: Catherine de'Medici and massacre of Protestants. Henry IV and the Edict of Nantes. Germany: Thirty Years' War.
- Sustained Ottoman (Muslim) power in eastern Europe. Significance of the Second Siege of Vienna.

*Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment (1600-1800)*

- Astronomy and the concept of the Universe. The influence of Copernicus and Galileo. The impact of science on religious authority.
- Spread of Enlightenment ideals throughout Europe and Americas. Anti-clericalism of Rousseau and Voltaire. Idea of religious freedom.
- Influence of American and French Revolutions on religious and secular thought.

*Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*

- Social reform movements in England and the United States: Methodism and John Wesley. Religious influence on abolition of slavery.
- Victorian notion of Christian conscience, service and progress. The rise of the "social gospel" in Europe and the United States. Protestant missionary movement in Asia and Africa.
- Influence of Darwin, Nietzsche and Marx on religious thought.
- Increased religious pluralism, ecumenism, secularism and atheism in the West. Suppression of religion in Communist states.
- Rise of European anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Zionism and the establishment of Israel.
- Fundamentalist revivals in a secular world. Continuing religious tensions in Middle East, Africa, India, Europe and Americas.

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